

(In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.)

BRIEF NOTES ON THE QUR- THE LAST SEVEN CHAPTERS

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BRIEF NOTES ON THE QUR-AN

The Last Seven Chapters

ALTHOUGH the chapters in the Holy Book were not inserted in the chronological order of their revelation, their ultimate arrangement was under Divine guidance, according to their subject-matter. The last seven chapters are a proof of this.

The Holy Prophet had been assured of complete success at the very beginning of his mission, when the fire of ruthless opposition had been kindled about him. All these chapters, with the exception of the third, entitled "The Victory," were revealed in the earliest days of his Prophethood, while this particular chapter has been regarded by some as the last in revelation, seeing that the Holy Prophet died eighty days after it was received.

The Prophet had once met with humiliating treatment in the plains of Mina, a place some six miles from Mecca. That was in the days of his persecution. He was forced to flee to Medina, and ten years after his flight he happened to come to the same

place with no less than 1,46,000 companions. After celebrating his last pilgrimage he arrived at this spot, and stood on a hillock in Mina. He saw signs of victory and success all around him. Among those present he could see thousands of his enemies, and many of his most ruthless persecutors, but by that time they had all become devoted to his cause. His eyes were filled with tears of joy since he found Islam established everywhere and his country purged of all idolatry. It was in the course of this journey that the chapter referred to was revealed. Its purport was to announce the fulfilment of the prophecies of success made in the earliest revelations. For example, the first chapter of the series gave good tidings to the effect that his efforts to establish the right cause would achieve a unique success, while his opponents would perish miserably. The second chapter, entitled "The Unbelievers," made a clearer prophecy of what has been mentioned. It asserts that both parties—the followers of the Prophet and his enemies, will reap the fruits of their respective actions—the former in the guise of success

and the latter of failure. The third and fourth chapters refer to the fulfilment of these predictions. Then comes the fifth chapter. It speaks of the Prophet's sole mission, which was to establish belief in the Unity of God throughout the whole world ; and this, in fact, is the fundamental principle of all success and prosperity in life. Without doubt it depends, to a great extent, upon our own exertions, as is pointed out by the Holy Book, but there are certain evil agencies which, pernicious as they are to the cause of our success, often work against us without our knowledge. They are, in fact, out of our control. We have no other alternative wherewith to escape them but the Mercy of God. These evils have been specified in the last two chapters.

Success in Life

THE ABUNDANCE OF GOOD

(*Al-Kausar*)

(1) " Surely We have given you abundance of good.

(2) " Therefore pray to your Rabb (Creator, Nourisher and Maintainer) and make sacrifice.

(3) " Surely your enemy is cut off."—Holy Qur-ān, cviii. 1-3.

True success lies in two things : firstly, in possessing all that is good, and secondly,

in the total removal of all agencies which, in any way, counteract or oppose our way to it. Such agencies are our real enemies. The sacred quotations mention both ; and it also shows us how to achieve them. They are prayer and sacrifice. According to the Qur-án, prayer repeatedly said is only by way of reminder of our duties to ourselves. It recalls to us two things : firstly, that we have to shun evil and indecency, and secondly, that we have to acquire all that is good, including the wealth of the world.

Anything that harms human interest is evil in Islam, while what is beneficial is virtue, but sometimes things that can be lawfully possessed are inimical to the higher aims of life. The attainment of the latter involves our parting with what we possess, though we might have attained those possessions by strenuous work. The surrender of such things amounts to sacrifice; and good becomes evil if it stands in the way of something higher.

The above verses make up the shortest chapter in the Qur-án. But they epitomize its whole teaching. Success in life is our chief aim and the chapter shows us a royal

road to that success, which is the avoidance of all that is harmful and the attainment of all that is good ; and the sacrifice of the latter, if it endangers our ultimate success.

Freedom of Religious Opinions

THE UNBELIEVERS

(*Al-Káfirun*)

- (1) " Say : O unbelievers !
- (2) " I do not worship that which you worship,
- (3) " Nor do you worship Him Whom I worship,
- (4) " Nor am I going to worship that which you worship,
- (5) " Nor are you going to worship Him Whom I worship :
- (6) " For you is your religion (and its recompense) and for me is my religion (and recompense)."—Holy Qur-án, cix. 1-6.

The concluding verses speak of the freedom of religious opinions which every one should possess. If the chapter were revealed in the days of the Prophet's persecution, a clearer pronouncement on the subject came in another revelation when the Prophet was at the height of his power. "There is no compulsion in religion" is the final verdict on the subject which we read in the second chapter, verse 256. Whether the Muslims be in adversity or prosperity the Qur-án would ask them to allow every other person to worship God in the way he pleases. No other religion has preached

freedom of conscience so clearly. The chapter also shows the Prophet's perseverance and the boldness of his convictions. He was persecuted on all sides and was the victim of every kind of tyranny, but he constantly declared that in no case would he leave the religion of Allah and adopt another faith.

The Arabic word for "religion" used in the sixth verse is "Din." It has two meanings—Religion and Recompense. Those who take the word "Din" in the verse to mean *recompense* read therein a true prophecy. The verse predicts the recompense awaiting the actions of the two parties, the Believers and the Unbelievers, and what followed showed that the Prophet and his followers were successful; while his enemies were practically wiped out.

How to Behave when Successful

THE HELP

(*An-Nasr*)

- (1) "When there comes the help of Allah and the victory.
- (2) "And you see men entering the religion of Allah in companies.
- (3) "Then glorify the Lord saying that He is free from all defects (for His possessing all good) and ask His forgiveness (and His suppressing your evil inclination). He is oft-returning (to mercy)."—Holy Qur-ân, cx. 1-3.

The above revelation came to the Prophet when at the height of his success. It came at the time of his last pilgrimage, when the whole country lay at his feet and Islam had become established. No Prophet before him saw such success, and yet he was asked to do three things. He had to remember that the object of his adoration is free from all evil ; and that He is without defect of any kind. Moreover, the Prophet had to remember that his Lord is possessed of all that is good, and by glorifying God in this way it was for him to adopt a mode of life which would set him above all imperfections. The Prophet had also been asked to pray to God to suppress the tendencies in man that induce him to make a wrong use of his faculties. The Holy Prophet (on whom be peace !) died some eighty days after the revelation, so the injunction contained therein is left to us to interpret. The chapter demands of us humility of mind, even when we are prosperous. It is for us always to shun evil and strive for further good. Every faculty in us is liable to abuse. We must pray God that He may crush in us any such inclination.

Opposition to Right Cause Meets Remorse and Failure in the End

THE FLAMES

(*Al-Lahab*)

(1) "Perdition overtakes both hands of the father of the flame and he will perish.

(2) "His wealth and what he earns will not avail him.

(3) "He shall soon burn in fire.

(4) "And his wife the bearer of slander.

(5) "Upon her neck a halter, strongly twisted rope."—
Holy Qur-ân, cxi. 1-5.

'Abdu'l-'Uzza was one of the uncles of the Holy Prophet, and it is reported that when the Prophet called together his near relatives and delivered to them the Divine Message to shun idolatry, 'Abdu'l-'Uzza cried out, "May you perish! Was it for this that you summoned us?" This uncle was of a fiery temper, and was therefore called "Abu Lahab," which literally means "Father of Flames." He followed the Prophet wherever he went in the preaching of Islam, and said to the people that the Prophet was a mad relation of his! Abu Lahab, however, had to receive most appalling news at the end of his life. He was one of the arch-enemies of the Holy Prophet, when, after his flight to Medina, the Meccans pursued the Prophet under the

leadership of all his enemies, with the one exception of Abu Lahab, who stayed in Mecca on account of his illness. The Meccans received a most humiliating defeat at the hands of the Prophet at Badr, and Abu Lahab could not survive the shock when the news of the defeat reached Mecca. He was burnt as it were by the flames of grief and shame, and died within seven days after the news. His wife also joined her husband in his mischievous deeds against the Prophet; she vilified him habitually, and met a similar end.

The chapter speaks of Abu Lahab and his wife as head of the enemy. Their fate demolished the opposition. The first verse comes as a Divine retort to the words of Abu Lahab, as given above.

Uniqueness and Self-reliance

THE UNITY

(*Al-Ikhlás*)

- (1) " Say : He, Allah, is One.
- (2) " Allah is He on Whom all depend.
- (3) " He begets not, nor is He begotten.
- (4) " And none is like Him."—Holy Qur-án, cxii. 1-4.

We try to excel each other in our possessions, but how few of us acquire

uniqueness in any respect. The above lines give us an insight into things that should be common knowledge to us, before we aspire to anything matchless. The most prominent among them is self-reliance. The Arabic word used as an attribute of God in this respect in the text is "Samad." It means the Lord to Whom others look for their needs, but He does not look to others for a like purpose. In other words, people may depend upon us, but we ought not to depend upon them for anything. Unless we cultivate the spirit of self-reliance and possess means to satisfy others; if they come to us for this purpose, we cannot stand on the pedestal of uniqueness.

In this respect, the Book also says that God is neither begotten nor does He beget any person. Doubtless we cannot probe the matter for ourselves. We are begotten and we beget others; but there are deeper meanings attached to the verse in respect of self-reliance. We may not look to others for any help, yet we do not hesitate to count on our parents or on our own children. But the Holy Book wants us to create such conditions around us as may enable us to

be independent even of our parents or our children. Though the chapter was revealed at the earliest period yet it comprehended the basic principles of all other religions.

Almost all of them cherish some sort of polytheistic tenets, and the above four verses contradict them all. For example, Hinduism makes God dependent upon Matter and Soul in His process of Creation. It also believes in many incarnates whom they regard as in the same category as God. The Trinitarians believe in the Godhead of the Son and the Holy Ghost. The Mariolators placed the Mother of Jesus on the Throne of God. The Hindus also believe in a number of female Divinities. But the verses cited destroy all such beliefs and preach simply and strongly Monotheism.

The Protection of God.

The last two Chapters of the Holy Qur-án are as follows:—

THE DAWN (*Al-Falaq.*)

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

“ Say : I seek refuge in the Lord of the dawn, from the evil of what He has created, and from the evil of the utterly dark night when it comes, and from the evil of those who cast (evil suggestions) in firm resolutions, and from the evil of the envious when he envies.”

THE MEN (*Al-Nas.*)

“ Say : I seek refuge in the Lord of men, the King of men, the God of men ; from the evil of the whisperings of the slinking devil, who whispers into the hearts of men, from among jinn and the men.”

If the Holy Book in its very beginning teaches us to seek assistance from God as regards every work to which we put our hand, by placing the word “Bismillah” (“In the Name of God”) at its commencement, it also teaches us to seek ultimate refuge in Him in the last two chapters ; they mention seven evils from which we can hardly escape, and we have to seek Divine protection against them. In one of them, entitled “The Dawn,” the Book speaks of four things :

(a) "The evil of what He has created." Everything in the creation of God becomes evil when misused or mishandled. Sometimes we remain unaware of the circumstances that make things so. They come all of a sudden and destroy our prospects in life.

(b) We often do not know how to acquit ourselves properly in various matters of importance in life. We grope in the dark, become entangled and see no way out.

(c) We sometimes make a firm resolution to work out our intent, but wrong suggestions come from others, and if we act upon them we are ruined.

(d) Our success in life often arouses jealousy in others and they begin to work against us, even without our knowledge.

We are often left in the dark in this respect, and, therefore, we should remain on the alert and commend ourselves to the protection of the Lord. The chapter has aptly been named "The Dawn," for it brings us out of the Darkness and makes us seek "refuge in the Lord of the Dawn."

The last chapter speaks of such evils as overtake us on account of polytheistic tendencies that may be lurking in our minds. Though we have to live in the world by our own efforts, yet we look to others as the givers of our bread. Again, we take others as the rulers of our destinies, but worst of all we pay to various fellow-creatures the same homage that should be reserved for our Lord. We make them the object of adoration.

But some times, again, we are driven to believe in unseen agencies besides God, who claim the worship due to Him. This destroys our belief in the Unity of God, and kills in us the spirit of self-reliance and independence. We have, therefore, been asked to take refuge in the Lord, Who is really our Maintainer, our King, our Deity.

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